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# THE CONDOR

An Illustrated Magazine  
of Western Ornithology

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## EDITORIALS

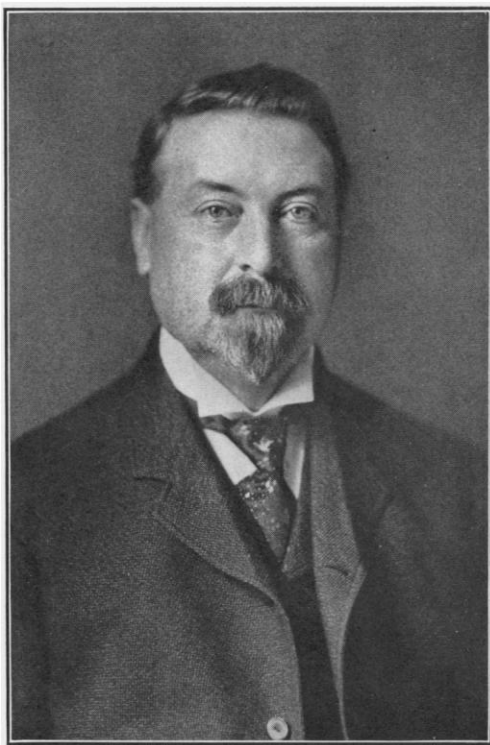
In our last issue we reviewed *The Warbler*, a magazine of birds published at Floral Park, New York. We now take the opportunity to tell our readers something of the editor of that magazine. It is relatively seldom that a man of affairs, who has been successful in his business undertakings and acquired wealth, enters the field of natural history as a source of recreation and enjoyment. Perhaps the nature of Mr. Childs' business (seed and flower culture) developed the tendency towards scientific interests. Or, what was far more probable, an inherent love of nature led naturally into that line of business. His success as a florist is almost too well known to require mention here; yet a brief history of the inception and growth of the enterprise will doubtless interest our readers. We take the liberty of quoting the following from an article in the *Long Island Magazine*:

"A little over thirty-three years ago there arrived at what is now universally known as Floral Park, Long Island, but what was then little more than a wilderness, a boy of eighteen years of age, having none of this world's possessions, but endowed above his fellows with ambition, determination and initiative. That lad was John Lewis Childs.

"Born on a farm near Jay, Maine, young Childs early realized that the possibilities held out by farm life in the New England States

were comparatively small. His love of flowers and Nature in general caused him to determine upon the career of a florist. Without capital it was impossible to enter any market which a settled community might afford, hence if his ambitions were to be fulfilled he must locate in some district which had not yet passed the pioneer stage. From time to time he had heard of Long Island, of its even and salubrious climate, of its fertile soil, and its ideal situation; and he instinctively felt that here, if anywhere, he would be afforded a field peculiarly well adapted to his enterprise.

"When Mr. Childs settled at Floral Park he had not the advantages of railway communica-



JOHN LEWIS CHILDS

tion nor any of the other conveniences of modern times. Undaunted by circumstances, however, and in the face of every obstacle, he entered upon what was destined to be his life-work, constructing the first house in the district and performing manual labor for some time entirely unassisted.

"How small a beginning this was will be appreciated when it is learned that the proceeds of his first year of effort amounted to less than a hundred dollars. That was a small beginning, but it did not discourage Mr. Childs, who realized that if success were to be obtained at

all its price must be years of hard work and frequent disappointment. The condition of the flower market, and the difficulty thru lack of adequate communication facilities, of successfully competing with florists better situated than himself, told Mr. Childs that if he were to succeed, he must pursue an entirely original policy. Advertising at that time was in its youth and very few men had even a fair conception of its value. Mr. Childs was among the few. Commencing to advertise in a small way in a number of periodicals whose circulation would be likely to reach the people he desired to serve, he gradually increased his patronage as his trade increased, later commencing to issue a catalogue of his own. Today the number of catalogues which leave Floral Park each year is well over a million, and Mr. Childs' products are sent to nearly every important country in the world, an especially large trade being done with Australia and New Zealand. These catalogues are printed at Floral Park at the plant of the Mayflower Publishing Company, of which Mr. Childs is president. When this company was founded in 1892 one small press was its capacity; today it has a large web, three cylinder, and three job presses, owns its own electrotyping plant, publishes a local weekly, and employs a total of sixty hands.

"Of the products of Floral Park themselves little need be said, for their reputation is universal. Mr. Childs has always striven to attain the best results possible to a florist who thoroly understands the science of his art, and a very large number of the most popular plants on the market today were originated by him. As a real estate operator Mr. Childs has also been unusually successful, having engineered a number of very profitable deals. At the present time he owns, besides his 300 acres at Floral Park, over 600 acres at St. James. In political life also Mr. Childs has long been a prominent figure.

"But it is as a naturalist, perhaps, more than as anything else that Mr. Childs is well known. In the first place he has one of the finest private libraries in the world of North American natural history. It includes Audubon's original work, *Birds of America*, as well as other rarities. Mr. Childs also possesses the largest private collection of mounted North American birds extant, together with their nests and eggs, and has besides a collection of shells, insects, and minerals."

The ornithological collection alone now numbers about 1110 species and subspecies of North American Birds, and some 1030 species of eggs in full sets, many of them with nests *in situ*.

Mr. Childs has recently become financially interested in southern California, and his visits

to this coast are becoming frequent. We think we have grounds for the expectation that he will ultimately build a home here, and possibly establish his museum in this climate, where collections are so little bothered by mold and other museum pests.

The diminutive winter wren has worn the generic titles of *Troglodytes*, *Anorthura* and *Olbiorchilus* successively on the A. O. U. List during the past ten years. And now it is to moult again, so Dr. Allen and Mr. Stone both tell us. The latest exhumed name for the bird is *Nannus*. This name is brief, like the bird, and means a dwarf; therefore appropriate, and an improvement over any of the others. Long may it wave!

It seems that the "possessives" are not yet exhausted as a subject for logical argument. Mr. Henderson's communication in this issue certainly presents his views as to the correct usage in a convincing manner. Perhaps Mr. Dawson could knock them under, tho!

Messrs. Frank M. Chapman and Louis Agassiz Fuertes spent the earlier portion of the summer in the Rocky Mountains of Canada. They made base camp at timberline, from which they were able to make intimate studies of such alpine-arctic species as the *Leucosticte*, *Pipit* and *White-tailed Ptarmigan*.

We are glad to announce that after something more than a year spent in Colorado and New Mexico, Mr. and Mrs. M. French Gilman have returned to their home at Banning, California. Mr. Gilman will now have more leisure for bird study, and expects to re-visit the Colorado Desert and adjacent mountain ranges with the purpose of tracing the distribution of certain birds and mammals.

Mr. Murray Watson, M. C. O. C., has removed from California, and taken up his residence in Denver, Colorado. That is getting to be a pretty lively center for bird workers of late.

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Bailey, of Washington, D. C., have been spending the summer in Biological Survey work in southern California.

Mr. Henry B. Kaeding is visiting California again after an extended sojourn in Sinaloa, Mexico.

Dr. T. S. Palmer, of the Biological Survey, visited Los Angeles in the early part of September. His mission was to obtain evidence convicting certain parties of elk-poaching in the Yellowstone National Park. Dr. Palmer is doing a valuable work in prosecuting special cases of game-law infringement, thus showing local wardens what can and should be done in that line. The Survey merits every possible

support, moral and practical, in this line of its work, and we of the Cooper Club are in line to help in the securing of more rigid enforcement of existing game and bird laws.

We are pleased to inform Cooper Club members that the entire cost of this large and varied issue of *THE CONDOR* is borne by Mr. John Lewis Childs, whose interest in the Club's welfare needs no further proof. Such a large and generous donation means that we are offering our readers in the present Volume far more than their combined dues and subscriptions would alone provide. We take this opportunity of heartily thanking Mr. Childs.

We have heard that Mr. R. H. Beck is contemplating yet another expedition to the Galapagos Archipelago.

The new Secretary of the Northern Division, Mr. Roswell S. Wheeler, was one of the original group of Cooper Club "boys" who used to hold animated bird meetings at Barlow's or Taylor's thirteen years ago. Those were jolly good times, and there's no reason why we shouldn't enjoy similar occasions now — only, perhaps, we are growing old and our enthusiasm wanes.

Let it be henceforth known, that *THE CONDOR* management will no longer print "For Sale" ads., relating to birds or eggs. We have been informed that it is contrary to the intent of the law to in any way make a commercial commodity out of such specimens, whether taken under permit or not.

Dr. William Lefrange Ralph, the well-known oologist, died at Washington, D. C., on July 8th, at the age of 57.

Dr. Ralph was born at Holland Patent, New York, in 1851. He was graduated in medicine in 1879 from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, and afterwards engaged in the practice of his profession in Utica, where he had resided since early childhood; but delicate health obliged him to abandon a medical career, and he turned to the less exacting study of natural history. From early boyhood he had cultivated a taste for this subject, and he now began in earnest the formation of a local collection of birds, eggs, and nests. In the study of the local avifauna he was associated with Mr. Egbert Bagg, and the researches of the two students resulted in the publication of an "Annotated List of the Birds of Oneida County, New York"<sup>1</sup> followed shortly by some "Additional Notes on the Birds of Oneida County, New York."<sup>2</sup>

It was to the subject of oology, however, that Dr. Ralph chiefly directed his attention, and

after nearly completing his collection of local species he spent much time in searching for desiderata, even employing men by the year in the Adirondacks and in Florida to hunt for certain rarities. In this way, and by direct purchase, he added many choice specimens to his collection, and secured valuable information on the nesting habits of various rare species.

Dr. Ralph early made the acquaintance of Major Bendire, and the two men soon became close friends. After the Major assumed charge of the National Museum collection of eggs, he usually spent his vacation in Utica, while Dr. Ralph always stopped at Washington on his annual visits to Florida. When the "Life Histories" were undertaken, he contributed many notes for them, and the two published volumes teem with items from his pen. In 1892 he sent the first installment of his collection to Washington, as a gift to the National Museum. This generous act was followed year after year by other donations, numbering in all about 10,000 specimens, almost all of which were in faultless condition, and accompanied by ample data.

In 1897, Dr. Ralph was chosen to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Major Bendire, and in 1901 his title was changed from Custodian to Curator. In the same year it was announced that he would continue the work on "Life Histories," and he began at once to accumulate data for the third volume (to include the families in the A. O. U. "Check-List" from the Fringillidæ to the Cœrebidæ; but owing to the precarious state of his health the volume was incomplete at the time of his death.

Dr. Ralph was a genial, mild-mannered man, of a uniformly cheerful and gentle disposition, one whose loss will be keenly felt by a large circle of friends and associates.—C. W. R.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### THE POSSESSIVE FORM IN VERNACULAR NOMENCLATURE

Editors of *THE CONDOR*:

Mr. Dawson's suggestion that either the possessive or adjectival form is right in such cases, for example, as *Centronyx bairdii*, seems open to serious question. The sparrow was not given to Mr. Baird. On the contrary, the name of Baird was given to the sparrow. Then why on earth should it be Baird's Sparrow? In many such cases the man whose name is given to the bird has never even seen the species, has had nothing to do with its discovery and was not even aware of the use of his name until the publication of the description. To illustrate,

<sup>1</sup> Trans. Oneida Hist. Soc., III, 1886, pp. 101-147.

<sup>2</sup> Auk, VII, 1890, pp. 229-232.